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Soldier deals with deployment with pen and ink

By Staff Sgt. Keith M. Anderson
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CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq — One Soldier here has used his art degree and training to fulfill a unique personal goal during his 15-month deployment, to create a graphic novel.

Spc. James L. Griffin, Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, finished his pen-and-ink graphic novel “The Warbling Cartel,” for stress relief and artistic growth, he said.

“Part of my impetus for starting the book was because I knew I was going to be out here for a while and didn’t want to let my artistic skills languish,” said Griffin, a native of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, on his first deployment.

The story focuses on Clive Corvax, a character without a conscience. Corvax gets a conscience implanted in his right hand, but becomes too weak and hamstrung by it, and then gets an aggressive and violent artificial intelligence implanted into his left hand.

“And hi-jinks ensue,” said Griffin.

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Griffin graduated in 2005 with bachelors of fine arts from Columbus College of Art and Design, a private college in Columbus, Ohio, and joined the Army in March 2006.

“I had student loans and no real job experience,” said Griffin. “Also, I wanted to see the world.”

Griffin said deploying is about keeping your rhythm, and stretching yourself.

“I started running cross-country more regularly since I’ve joined the Army,” said Griffin. “I’ve done 10 km runs and the 5 km fun runs, and I’d compare this deployment to running. It’s a challenge to keep your rhythm and it’s a test of endurance, and I’m sure it’ll feel great when we’re finished.”

He has accomplished more than he thought he could, Griffin said.

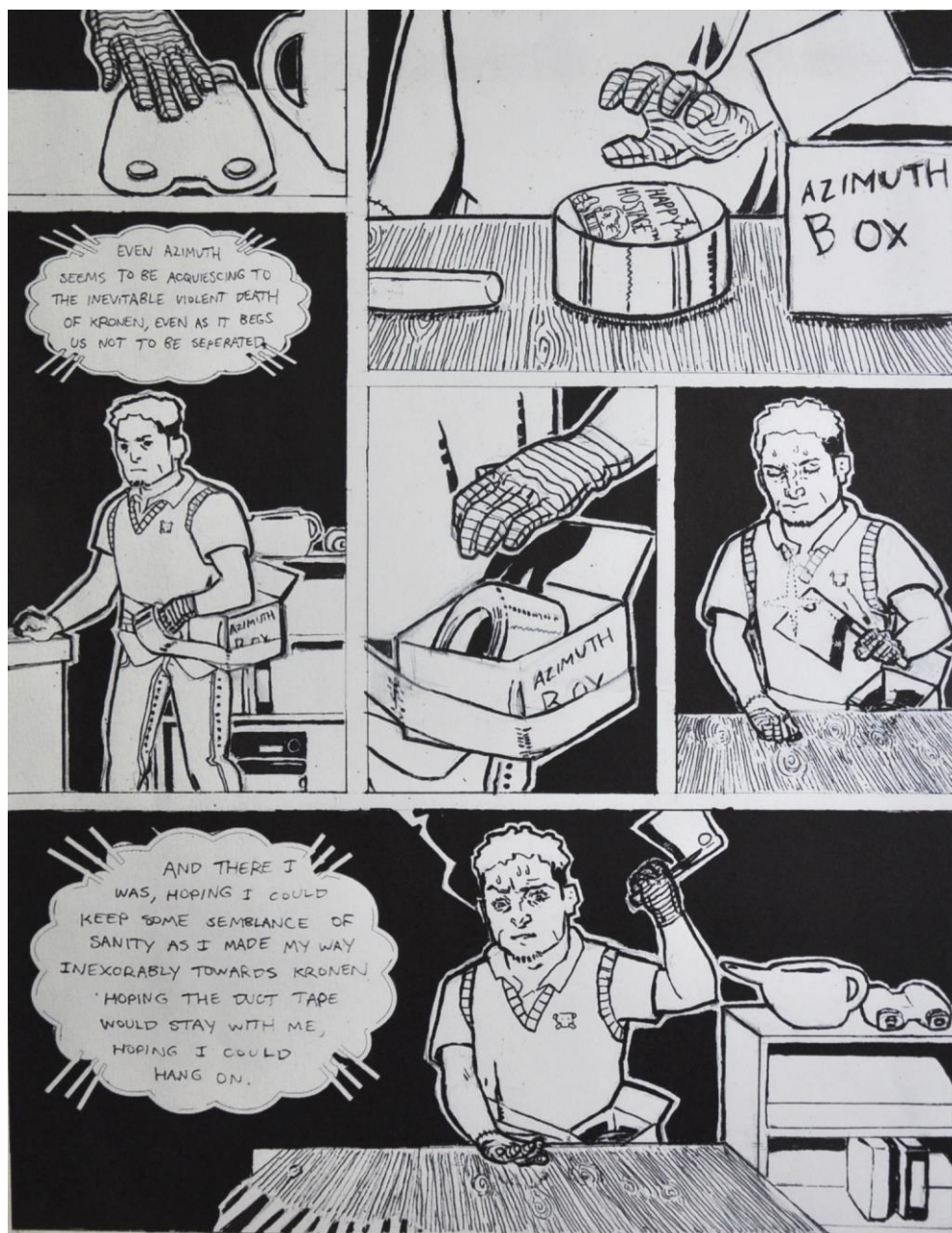
“I’d compare the emotional experience of this deployment to running farther than I’d previously thought possible,” said Griffin. “This comic itself was more pages than any illustrated narrative work I’d ever done.”

Griffin said he plans to publish the novel, but not without further input and blessing from co-writer and co-creator Jess Hogfoss, a former comrade who is now in the private sector.

“I met (then Spc.) Hogfoss back when we were both in the 1st Armored Division,” said Griffin. “We hit it off almost immediately, and bonded over new wave and post-punk music as well as speculative fiction, all of which worked their way into the themes and aesthetics of the comic as we imagined it.”



Spc. James L. Griffin, Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, has used his art degree and training to fulfill a unique personal goal during his 15-month deployment to Contingency Operating Base Q-West, Iraq, to create a graphic novel. He finished his pen-and-ink graphic novel “The Warbling Cartel,” for stress relief and artistic growth, he said. “Part of my impetus for starting the book was because I knew I was going to be out here for a while and didn’t want to let my artistic skills languish,” said Griffin, a native of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, on his first deployment. (Photos by Staff Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)



Lead character Clive Corvax prepares to sever his 'conscience' in the climactic pages of "The Warbling Cartel," an as-of-yet unpublished graphic novel by Spc. James L. Griffin, Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade. Griffin finished the novel while deployed to Contingency Operating Base Q-West, Iraq, during Operation Iraqi Freedom 08-10.